

REINVESTING IN ARKANSAS FAMILIES

**A VISION AND BLUEPRINT FOR
ARKANSAS' TANF PROGRAM**
PRESENTED BY THE ARKANSAS TEMPORARY
ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES
OVERSIGHT BOARD

JOBS • EDUCATION • TRAINING • TRANSPORTATION • CHILDCARE



**DEPARTMENT OF
WORKFORCE SERVICES**
JOBS FOR PEOPLE. PEOPLE FOR JOBS.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN



The Arkansas Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Oversight Board is charged with independent oversight of Arkansas' TANF program. Its focus is to safeguard the integrity of the state's welfare-to-work program — in effect, to act as the eyes and ears of the public in overseeing the TANF program. The nine-member board is made up of public and private professionals and is charged with regularly examining the various programs and initiatives operated by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services and the Arkansas Department of Human Services with regard to the state's TANF program.

The Board held its first meeting on February 7, 2008 and effectively launched its efforts to ensure Arkansas has a sound TANF model and provides effective services to the state's low income citizens, thereby helping provide Arkansas with a more skilled workforce. A statutory requirement of Arkansas Act 514 of 2007 authorizes the Board to develop a vision and blueprint for the Arkansas TANF program. We believe this initial vision and blueprint of the Arkansas TANF program will serve as a foundation for the future work of the board as well as program administration. The Arkansas TANF Oversight Board is committed to ensuring that its decision-making process is transparent to the public. Meeting notices and agendas, along with the board's reports and other pertinent documents will be posted on the Department of Workforce Service's website at: www.dws.arkansas.gov. Public participation in the process is greatly encouraged.

I would like to thank the members of the Board for their support and dedication to the effort thus far. In addition, Director Artee Williams and the DWS staff deserve accolades for their tireless work to execute the directives of the Legislature and Oversight Board. Finally, I would like to thank Governor Mike Beebe for his leadership, support, and confidence. It is a pleasure to serve the people of the great State of Arkansas. On behalf of the board members and support staff of the Board, I invite you to review this report and provide us with your feedback.

- Donnie L. Lindsey, Chairman
Arkansas TANF Oversight Board

THE TANF PROGRAM

In 1997, the Arkansas General Assembly enacted landmark legislation, Arkansas Act 1058, that fundamentally changed the nature of welfare assistance in Arkansas. The Arkansas Personal Responsibility and Public Assistance Reform Act built on welfare reform provisions in the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act enacted by Congress in 1996. The law eliminated the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program and replaced it with the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

THE FOUR PURPOSES OF TANF

- Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.
- End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.
- Reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numeric goals for decreased incidence of these pregnancies.
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Per Arkansas Act 514 of 2007, the TANF program is defined as Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA), Work Pays, Career Pathways Initiative, and the Community Investment Initiative. Arkansas created these innovative TANF programs to address the four purposes of TANF. With these innovative programs, Arkansas has transformed public assistance from a system focused on entitlement to one focused on personal responsibility and sustained self-sufficiency.

TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The TEA program is a state-administered program that serves families in every political subdivision in the state. The TEA program is funded by federal funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant and is administered by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services. TEA provides time-limited cash assistance to needy families with (or expecting) children and furnishes parents with work training and other supportive services they need in order to attain permanent self-sufficiency. The welfare reform law changed the welfare system into one requiring participation in activities leading to employment as a condition of receiving time-limited services. The TEA program also provides assistance to children being cared for by non-parental guardians.

ARKANSAS WORK PAYS PROGRAM

Arkansas Work Pays is a post-employment program created by Arkansas Act 1705 of 2005 and provides assistance to prior participants of the Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) Program. Families participating in the Arkansas Work Pays Program will also be eligible for the same support services and assistance as families enrolled in the TEA program and shall receive a monthly cash assistance payment. The intent is to provide the necessary supports — workforce training, transportation, child care, family counseling, etc. — to help those at-risk families move up the economic ladder, achieve self-sufficiency, and end dependency.

CAREER PATHWAYS INITIATIVE

Under the Career Pathways Initiative, Arkansas invests public funds to support the development and implementation of career pathways programs in the state's two-year colleges and technical institutions for low-income families.

Career Pathways programs represent a unique post-secondary training service delivery model, one that addresses the unique challenges low-income adults face in terms of successfully completing post-secondary training. Career pathways programs provide training in local high-demand occupations and career fields, in addition to intensive counseling and supplemental services such as child care and transportation assistance.

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT INITIATIVE

Arkansas Act 1705 of 2005 authorized the Department of Workforce Services to contract with private or community organizations, including faith-based organizations, to offer services and supports to parents, children, and youth in their communities. The Community Investment Initiative focuses on improving outcomes for youth; parenting and family functioning; marriage and relationship skills; employment skills and family connections of parents who leave state jails and prisons; and support services to child-only cases in the TEA program.

ARKANSAS TANF OVERSIGHT BOARD

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TEA Client Advocate

ARTEE WILLIAMS
Director, Arkansas Department
of Workforce Services

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Oversight Board was created by Arkansas Act 514 of 2007. The nine-member board is made up of public and private professionals appointed by the Governor and the Legislature.

The TANF Oversight Board is required to review, recommend and approve proposals for TEA program statewide implementation and the integration of TEA program services with all other workforce services offered in local centers. The TANF Oversight Board is responsible for seeking ways to continuously improve the TEA program and engage the resources of government, business, faith-based, and community organizations in order to empower Arkansas' TEA recipients and low-income families to achieve long-term self-sufficiency and improved quality of life. The Board will also develop measures and benchmarks to gauge the progress of the TEA program; submit reports to the Governor and to the House Committee on Public Health, Welfare, and Labor and the Senate Committee on Public Health, Welfare, and Labor regarding the operations of the Transitional Employment Assistance program, the Arkansas Work Pays program, the Career Pathways Initiative, the Community Investment Initiative, and other TANF initiatives. The law also requires the Board to develop a vision and blueprint for the Transitional Employment Assistance Program in order to:

- Provide effective services to the Transitional Employment Assistance Program and Arkansas Work Pays Program clients
- Improve performance on the Transitional Employment Assistance Program client outcomes; and
- Integrate Transitional Employment Assistance Program services, Work Pays Program services and Department of Workforce Services.

ARKANSAS TANF OVERSIGHT BOARD MEETINGS

The Arkansas TANF Oversight Board held its first official board meeting on Thursday, February 7, 2008. During the months of February and March 2008, the Board held strategic planning sessions to facilitate the development of this vision and blueprint for the Arkansas TANF program. The purpose of the vision and blueprint is to set the direction for the agency and program stakeholders as well as provide the framework for many other operational processes. We believe that planning is a continuous process by which the Board envisions the program's future and identifies the procedures, operations, and resources necessary to achieve that future. This vision plan will serve as the blueprint for the foundation of resource allocation, performance planning, business plans, and performance measurement.

The following pages reflect the TANF Oversight Board's vision and blueprint for the Arkansas TANF program.

BOARD MISSION

In partnership with all available resources:

To guide the operation of TANF-funded programs by creating a high performing culture that supports strategic planning, innovative policies, effective community partnerships, and data-driven decisions.

VISION STATEMENT

We envision a TANF program which:

Unifies and empowers Arkansas families by providing quality, supportive, and timely services to help them become self-sufficient and achieve their full potential.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Provide customer-driven services in a timely manner
- Empower clients to reach their full potential
- Build trust and respect between all parties involved in the program
- Ensure flexibility to meet changing needs
- Leverage opportunities with community partners
- Promote integration and coordination of services through public and private partnerships
- Foster continuous improvement in order to maximize efficiency and effectiveness in services
- Ensuring all activities are outcome and data-driven
- Assure fiscal responsibility and integrity



PROGRAM CHALLENGES

While every organization providing direct social services or workforce services to constituents faces unique issues, most of these organizations also face a common set of organizational challenges. Whether wrestling with an increasing demand for services or improving disappointing program outcomes, organizations face challenges that cross traditional program and geographic boundaries. The TANF Oversight Board identified specific challenges to achieving the proposed program vision. They are as follows:



STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

Just as the challenges apply to most organizations, so do the strategies to overcome them. We all know today's reality – state agencies continue to face social, political, and economic constraints. At the same time, we are looking to modernize, simplify, and improve our processes while maintaining our accountability.

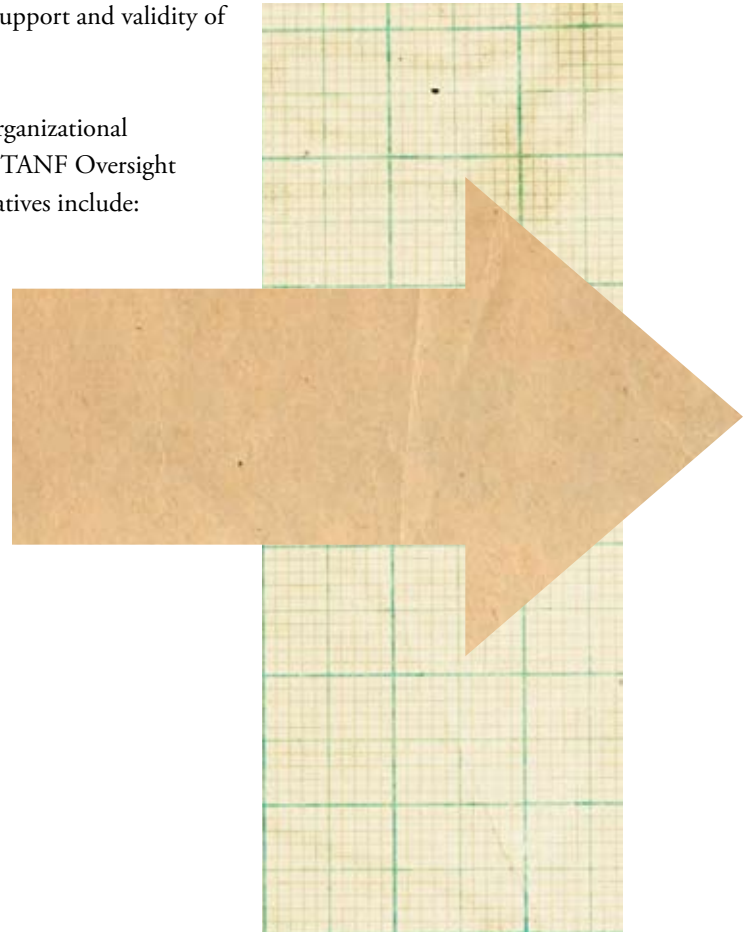
During the process of achieving the vision and blueprint, the TANF Oversight Board developed several specific strategic imperatives that will enable the Arkansas TANF program to overcome the aforementioned challenges. These strategies will help to reinforce our guiding principles and truly address the challenges faced by the program. We believe these imperatives will allow the Arkansas TANF program to become a more effective and efficient service delivery organization.

How do we build a strong and innovative TANF program that can survive and prosper during times of great change? In recent years, we have learned much about successful organizations. The success of such organizations can be understood by how well the organization handles their customers.

The connection between customer satisfaction and government organizations is less direct than for many businesses. Dissatisfied customers in business mean decreasing sales and new competition. Dissatisfied customers in government can express themselves through elections but that is a slower and less direct process. In business, customer problems will affect the bottom line in a few months, but in government the impact of dissatisfaction can take years. Therefore, there is a need to develop more timely methods to assess satisfaction. Citizen complaints, if unknown or ignored, can result in the failure of efforts and a depletion of support and validity of all government.

The following Strategic Objectives Matrix captures the nine organizational capabilities required to support the successful adoption of the TANF Oversight Board's mission and vision. The three primary strategic imperatives include:

1. Putting clients at the center
2. Improving client outcomes
3. Integrating publicly funded services



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

PEOPLE

PROCESS

TECHNOLOGY

**PUT CLIENTS
AT THE CENTER**

Delivering
services driven
by client needs

Streamlining
processes

Updating automated
systems

**IMPROVE
CLIENT
OUTCOMES**

Better decision
making

Improved
accountability
and efficiency

Measure outcomes

**INTEGRATING
PUBLICLY
FUNDED
SERVICES**

Understand
gaps in services
and benefits

Develop
complete view
of the client

Enable collaboration
through data sharing





PUT CLIENTS AT THE CENTER

Putting the client at the center means delivering services driven by client needs and not merely by legislative or program needs. It means assessing a customer's needs and developing a holistic view of the client's circumstances. Paramount to this assessment process is an increased focus on improving the client/case manager relationship. Continuous training and professional development of staff should enhance the ability to understand and address the various needs of our clients. Once these needs are identified, we will be more readily able to target services more effectively. This targeted approach will allow the application of the program's limited resources more thoughtfully with an eye toward maximizing their value to the client and the taxpayer.

Additionally, a client-centric focus will provide an opportunity for more effective client engagement. This effective engagement premise is based upon the belief that it should be our goal to assist every client by developing a self-sufficiency plan, and track how that client is making progress towards this goal, relative to that plan.

Putting the client at the center should result in many improvements to the TANF program for the clients themselves. Most notably, efforts towards streamlining current processes whereby clients' access to services and identification of their needs are more easily identified and more readily addressed.

The current automated systems have shortcomings that limit their usefulness in helping to move recipients toward employment and economic independence. One shortcoming is that these automated systems do not share information about recipients that is needed by the different agencies situated to serve them. Another shortcoming is the system's limited capabilities to query and manipulate data that severely hampers the ability to coordinate services and monitor recipient's progress. Updating these automated systems to include both electronic linkages for client referrals as well as increased data analysis capabilities.





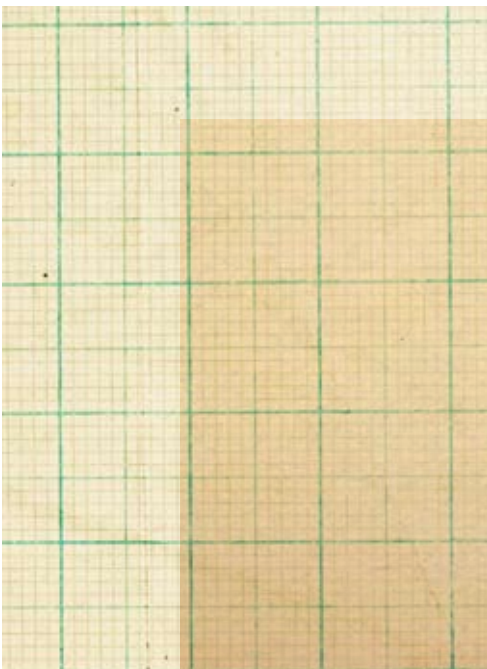
For organizations to be able to focus on improving client outcomes they must be able to measure outcomes. This requires defining the right outcomes to reflect what the organization is trying to achieve and the impact the organization wants its services and benefits to have on its recipients. This information must be used effectively to shape program definitions, define service offerings, and the program's continuous improvement strategies.

Improved decision making includes a clear assessment of current program policies coupled with a clear list of potential harms and benefits of all future overarching decisions. Within each state receiving TANF funding, internal economic, political, and demographic characteristics vary. State policymakers must seek out policies that best aid their recipients in moving off public assistance rather than acquiesce to political, economic, and other pressures. TANF programs are notoriously subjected to a diverse set of guidelines, originating from many different and uncoordinated sources. We must also make better decisions in providing workers with the tools to apply best practices to difficult client circumstances.

Outcomes can also be improved by imposing accountability on workers, service providers, clients, and board members themselves. This means establishing performance-based contracts with both clients and service providers and tying those contracts to the outcomes established by the program leadership.

Improving client outcomes encompasses consideration towards increased efficiency. Increasing efficiency is not just a matter of doing the same things a little better; it is really about doing different things that together can maximize the value of both program and administrative funding.

Finally, efforts to improve client outcomes must include efforts to better utilize all available economic data that indicates factors known to influence reliance upon assistance programs.





INTEGRATING PUBLICLY FUNDED SERVICES

The existing level of coordination between TANF services and other publicly funded services is oftentimes a reflection of how state and local agencies have worked with each other in the past. Several challenges inhibit coordination efforts: different program definitions, complex reporting requirements between TANF and other programs, and different information systems that do not share data. Improved coordination of services through enhanced public and private partnerships will lead to better integration of publicly funded services.

Improved coordination will assist in the identification of gaps in service and benefits. Once these new relationships are forged, this will be the primary mechanism in finding the sufficient resources and providers to bridge these gaps.

In addition, differences in reporting requirements, resulting from how the success of each program is measured, also hinder coordination efforts. Each program has its own separate measures of success that subsequently drive program design and use of funds. Any integration effort must begin with data sharing across programs and funding streams.

To integrate programs meaningfully, organizations must share client and case data to develop a complete view of the client and their individual circumstances. They must work towards enabled real-time collaboration so that all are involved in developing and delivering a common, coordinated service plan.



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The TANF Oversight Board believes that the Arkansas TANF program must emphasize ongoing performance management and continuous improvement consistent with DWS goals and objectives. Tracking and reporting of performance assures accountability to both taxpayers and program participants and contributes to program efficiency and effectiveness.

CREATING VALUE FOR ARKANSAS TAXPAYERS

Continuous improvement in the TANF program serving Arkansas' most vulnerable families benefits not only those participants but all of Arkansas citizens. Timely access to necessary services that effectively promote self-sufficiency results in more cost-effective expenditure of public funds and better results for participants.

The TANF Oversight Board advocates the use of continuous improvement strategies that we believe will result in workforce success achievements with the TANF program.

INCREASING EMPHASIS ON ACCOUNTABILITY IN TANF

Performance standards, performance management, and continuous improvement are all initiatives designed to enhance delivery of services and ultimately to improve the lives of Arkansans in need. As leadership focuses on performance standards and program outcomes, producing public value while at the same time building program and organizational integrity. The effect on the TANF program will be to make it more accountable to participants, agency staff, and taxpayers. Measuring progress and continuously evaluating programs and services helps to focus efforts on meaningful outcomes for everyone.

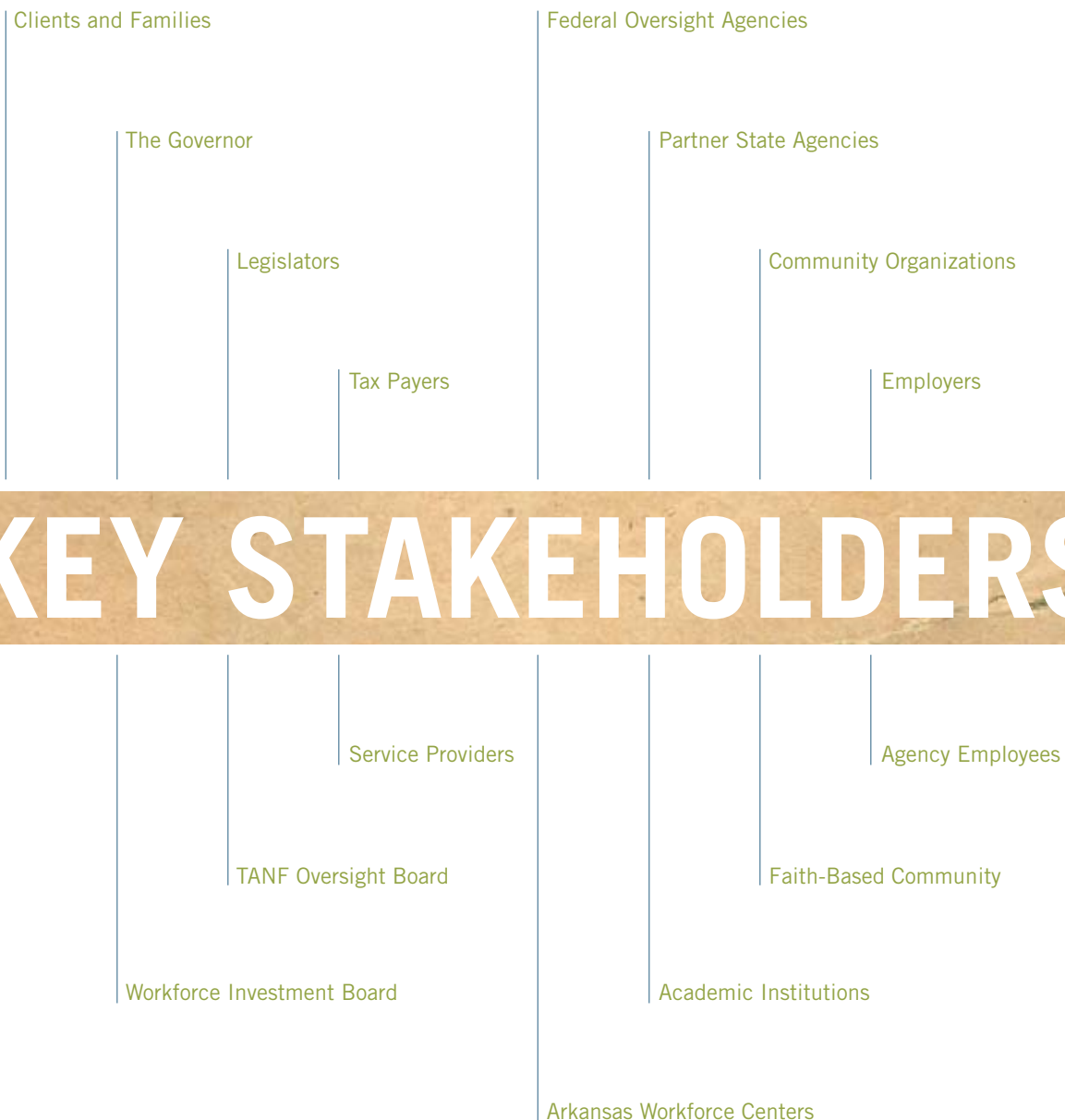


STAKEHOLDER COMMITMENT

In state government, one can never downplay the importance of stakeholder commitment. The TANF Oversight Board recognizes that without the commitment from the various stakeholders, the TANF program would not be the success it is today. The Board also realizes that in order to achieve continued success in the future, that same commitment from our stakeholders will be a necessity. For the sake of definition, we have defined “stakeholder” as “those groups without whose support the program will cease to exist.” The core concept, in other words, is “survival;” without the support of such key groups, the program will not survive.

Understanding the value systems of our major partners helps maintain these relationships and ensures useful outcomes. Involving diverse stakeholders will also deepen our understanding of the social and political contexts in which various components of the program operate.

The TANF Oversight Board identified the following stakeholders during their strategic planning process. Others will be added as needed to achieve the vision and blueprint.



CONCLUSION

A vision and blueprint without the resources and commitment from management, stakeholders, service delivery staff, and a method to measure results is nothing more than a dust catcher destined for shelf space and the occasional program promotional opportunity. On the other hand, a clearly defined, measurable and promoted strategy can determine where a program or organization is going over the next five years, how it's going to get there and how it will know if it got there.

In the past several months, the TANF Oversight Board has faced key choices as they decide the next direction for their Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs. Recent changes in program regulations have given this body a stark choice: focus solely on meeting the work rates, even if that means making the program less accessible or less effective at helping needy families and helping families move to work, or increase work participation rates in ways that improve families' employment outcomes, even if that path is the more expensive one to take.

The TANF Oversight Board has chosen the latter option and is exploring strategies that improve the quality of the State's welfare program.

ARKANSAS TANF OVERSIGHT BOARD FUTURE ACTIVITIES

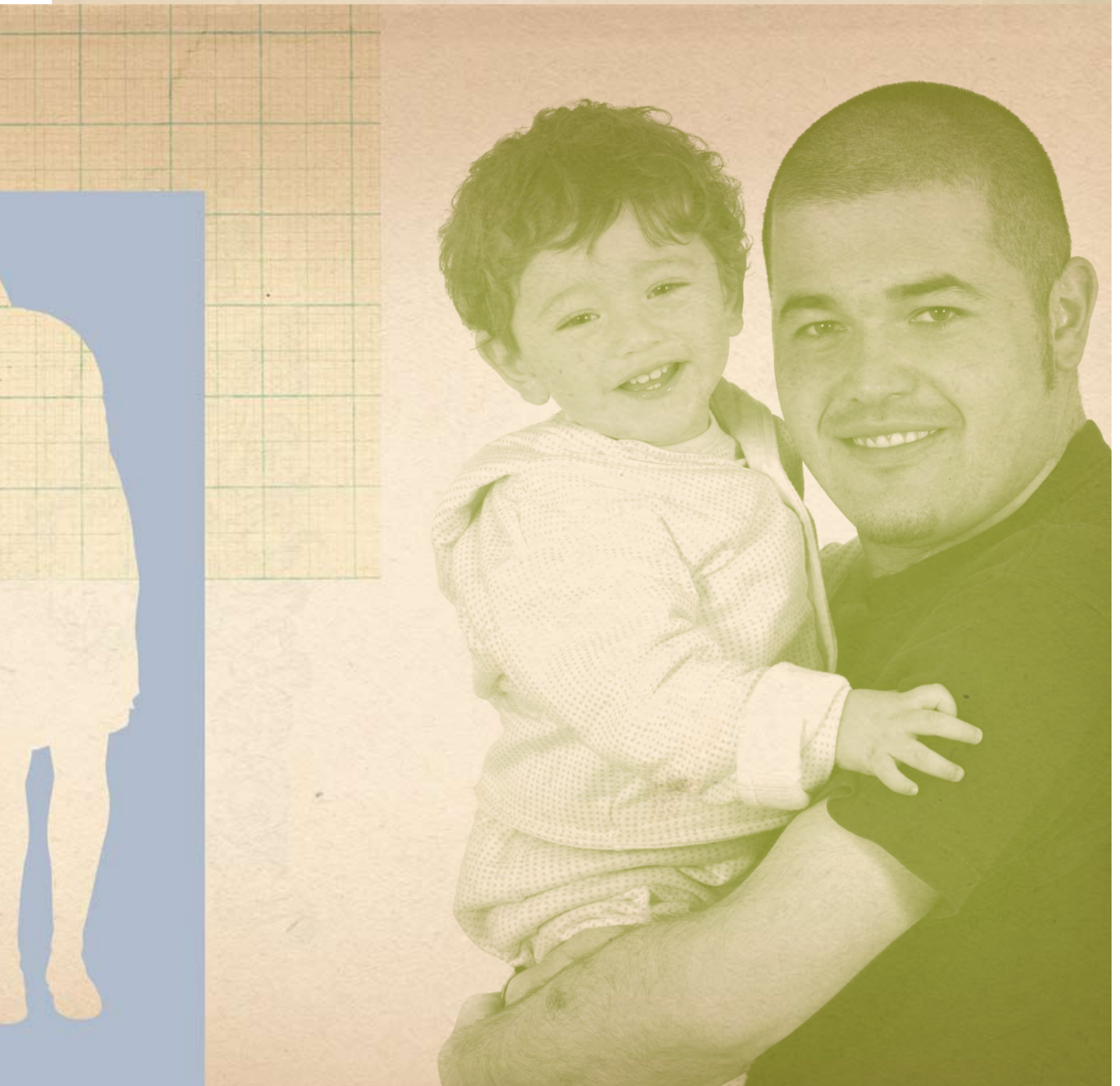
The Arkansas TANF Oversight Board will endeavor to set the agenda for the state's improved TANF Program. Thus, the strategic mission and vision included herein is flexible enough to meet the safety-net needs of the state's low-income population, not just through the current period of economic uncertainty but into the next economic recovery and beyond.

The TANF Oversight Board is committed to facing this great challenge and responding effectively to this new and ever-evolving landscape.



ARKANSAS TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES PROGRAM

Empowering Families for Self-Sufficiency and Quality of Life





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